

Scanlan's Bomb

The long-delayed October 1970 issue of Scanlan's, the self-styled muckraking monthly, is finally reaching its readers. Over the course of the past three months, Scanlan's editors Sidney Zion and Warren Hinckle have loudly protested that their special issue on "Guerrilla War in the U.S.A." has been suppressed by "russian printers" in New York and refused by other plants across the country. According to Zion and Hinckle, the printers balked at reproducing illustrations Scanlan's had found in underground demolition manuals. Some of the printing firms, however, insisted that the issue was finances, rather than free speech; a deposit from Scanlan's, they said, was all they would require to get their presses rolling. Whether the reason for the difficulty was actually persecution, paranoia or just plain press-agentry, there is no doubt the affair was compounded by official interference: when the issue eventually found a Canadian printer, almost the entire press run of more than 100,000 was abruptly impounded (and then just as abruptly released), some of it by U.S. Customs in San Francisco but most by police in Montreal.

Now that the "Guerrilla War" issue is out, dated "January," readers with expectations whetted by the publicized delay may be disappointed. Certainly, apprentice guerrillas hoping for a how-to-do-it handbook or even a sympathetic "Right on!" will be left unsatisfied by Scanlan's lack of editorial commitment to the revolutionary struggle. A quarter of the magazine is given over to a dry tabulation of events ranging from bombings of Selective Service centers to more ambiguous acts of vandalism that Scanlan's sometimes generously interprets as in the guerrilla spirit.

Indeed, in more than one article, "Guerrilla War" seems to strain to establish its own legitimacy. Thus, Hinckle's prefatory essay seeks to neutralize the criticism that the guerrillas' lack of unifying "goals" mitigates their effectiveness. According to Hinckle, in modern revolutionary doctrine ends are created by means, and presumably justified by them as well. This, he says, is "the carefully thought out ideological cornerstone of contemporary guerrilla theory."

By the same logic, Hinckle implies that

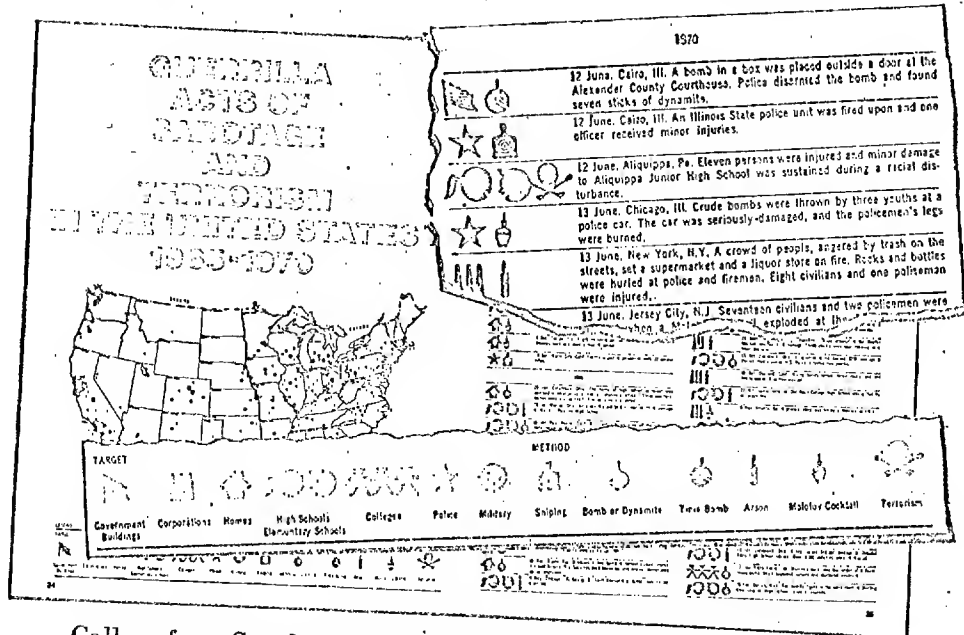
anyone who commits an act of sabotage or vandalism against an Establishment building thereby becomes a guerrilla in good standing—unless of course he is a racial, religious or right-wing bigot, in which case he is *not* a guerrilla. And in a similar exercise to establish the number of guerrillas in the military ("in the tens of thousands"), an unsigned article conscripts "15,000 men . . . in military stockades, over 90 per cent of them on AWOL charges," into the guerrilla ranks, along with deserters, resisters, officer-killers, rioters and those who camouflage their GI haircuts under long-hair wigs when off duty.

Mayhem: But much of the issue is devoted to those who proclaim that they are bonafide guerrillas. There are sadening first-person testimonials to the joys of bombing a military police station, free-loading at supermarkets ("the peo-

ple's restaurants"), burning a bank and generally committing mischief and mayhem in the euphoria of ideological purity. But for those who find such stories uplifting, Scanlan's ends with a letdown.

"Since I see no need for the bomb, nor any possibility of its succeeding, nor any hope in its purchasing a better world," writes Zion in a concluding editorial, "I must oppose it." To the bombers, he offers no sympathy: "Let 'em eat dynamite." Hinckle is more equivocal about violence. In his final word, he refuses to disown the saboteurs—"I think those I've met are all right"—and finds intellectual safety in a nice distinction between good bombings and bad bombings. Nevertheless, all that Hinckle can offer is a bit of now-conventional liberal wisdom: "The only way to bombproof this society is to reform the system," he says. "The alternatives are repression or revolution, and probably both."

—ANTHONY WOLFF



Collage from Scanlan's assessment of guerrilla mischief and mayhem

Newsweek